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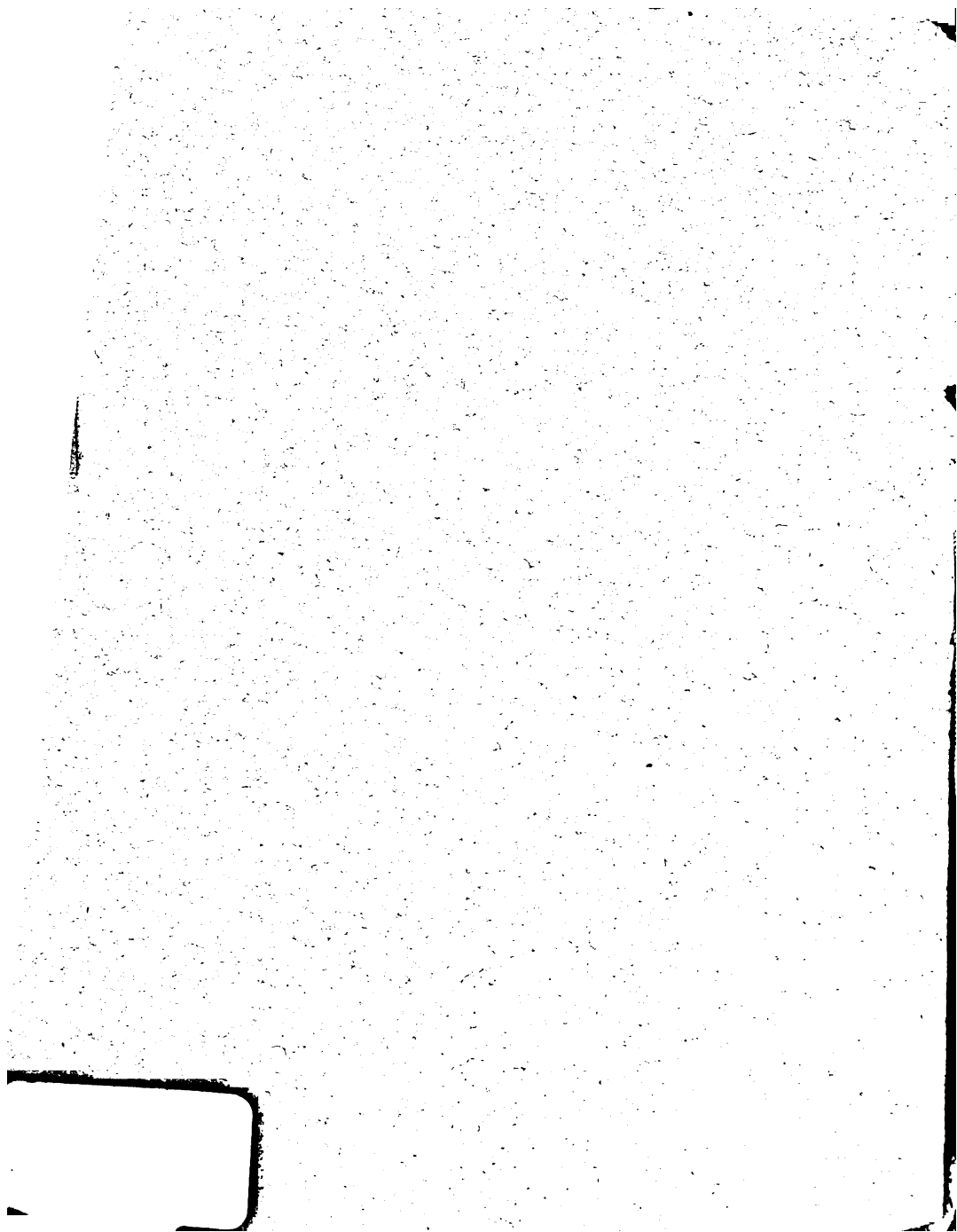
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GALLIO

THE PRIZE POEM ON A SACRED SUBJECT

1908

BY

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*"Non civium ardor prava jubentium . . .
Mente quatit solida."*

Hor. Carm. iii., 3.

GALLIO.

To Lucius Annæus Seneca in Rome
Gallio his brother,—Cæsar's pro-consul
Where o'er the twain and hardly-sundered seas,
Ionian and Ægean, Acrocorinth
Stands sentinel,—gives greeting, and such news
As exiled life may offer, and good thanks
For memories that shine like motes of gold
In the slow-falling sand of empty days.

Thou knowest, brother,—who so well as thou,
Co-heir with me to learning?—how my soul
Burned, as a caged bird maddens for the woods
In April, to behold this land, this heaven
Unfolded golden in our boyish dreams,—
This Greece, the champion of the light divine
Against barbarian dimness that recoiled
As dark-plumed night sweeps smokewise from the sun;
This antique seat of Freedom and the Gods,

U. of M.

Whose forests yielded Argo, and whose mines
 Gave the bronze beaks that tore the Persian's heart,
 Swooping like greedy hawks, at Salamis;
 This shrine, this nurse of heroes, whose least name
 Haunted me like a passion,—not me alone;
 But thou, my brother, whose yet youthful front
 Glowed pale with Stoic brooding, and whose lips
 Seemed carved austere in marble,—thou hast shared
 This ecstasy. Dost thou remember yet
 That breathless night upon the Palatine
 In Cæsar's garden, where the jasmine gleamed
 Faint in the dusk, and white moths drifted slow,
 When we twain and the young Domitius
 (Whom the Gods guard to prosper Rome and thee!)
 Lay 'neath a moon whose tawny disk foretold
 Vintage, and harvest-home; and o'er the hills
 The dog-star burned like a revengeful eye?

How the whole scene comes back! I see the lad
 His bright hair crowned with roses, lying prone,
 Plucking with wilful fingers at the grass,
 Turning anon to watch thy face; and thou,
 Thy worn cheek resting on a hand too thin,
 Bent o'er the scroll upon thy knees, that came
 From Cæsar's house, the yellow vellum edged
 With thick sea-purple. Not the lips of him

H O U

Who wrought and sang that deathless argument
 Dwelt with more passion on their theme than thine ;
 O'er Hector dying and Patroclus cold,
 And Priam, not more thick with tears his eyes
 Whose name resounds like thunder of high floods ;
 Whose speech is like a vision of the sea.

But when thy voice failed, and the perfumed lamp
 Died, and the moon waxed argent, and a breeze
 Came softly, like the little timid ghost
 Of some dead child, and stirred the cypresses ;
 The boy sprang suddenly from earth, and stood
 Towering, like a beautiful young god,
 And gazed on Rome, and shook his hair, and cried :
 " O night and austere stars, and vagrant moon
 Lured Latmos-ward, be witness of this vow :
 Greece shall be free when I am Emperor ! "
 And thou, with dreamy eyes that looked to where
 The Forum and its gleaming colonnades
 Parodied Athens, raisedst thine arms to Heaven,
 And spakest with sharp yearning in thy voice,
 Homesick for lands unknown :—" To leave the glare
 And clamorous magnificence of Rome !
 The teeming games where virgins stare at blood,
 The parasite, the patron, the dull crowd ;
 The spies that dog our path, suborned of him

Who grudges us our office ; the formal life
 Of courtiers ; the recurrent spectacle
 Of our triumphant consuls, haling home
 Their load of skin-clad Dacians in chains,—
 Untamed by wounds and hunger, yet aghast
 At our hyæna-throng ;—to leave it all,
 And live a shepherd on the floral hills
 Of Thessaly and brown Ætolia,
 Or as the humblest pupil of the Porch,
 Carry the Master's books ; content to hear
 Some fragment of his lore, content to see,
 When the dawn swoops across Eubœa's heel,
 The pale Pentelican quarries flash to gold !”
 These were thy words. I held my peace and sighed.

And now thou tarriest yet in Rome, the friend
 Of Cæsar, loved of all men, and that dream
 Is yet untarnished ; wherefore praise the gods.
 But I, I praise them not for this desire
 Fulfilled, who came to Greece a moon ago,
 Faring from Ostia with Vulturian wind
 Past the swart brood of Liparean isles
 And fell Charybdis, and the lovely heir
 Of Grecian flowers and songs forgot in Greece,—
 Thyme-scented Sicily ;—thence o'er the dark
 Wide-heaving bosom of a dreamy sea

~~~~~



Sped by propitious gales, till I beheld,  
 Black and sharp-edged against the dawn, like giants  
 Who guard infernal flame, rugged and vast,  
 Leucadia, Zacynthos, Ithaca,  
 And pale beyond them in a morning mist,  
 Hellas. No Fate can rob me of that hour.  
 O violet hills and sea, and deathless names  
 Of cities, and dim haunts of sylvan gods !  
 But for this Corinth, brother, 'tis a place  
 That the sun laughs to see, a gaudy tomb  
 Haunted by peevish ghosts, a wilderness  
 Of formal streets and tenements, once held  
 By veterans of the divine Julius,  
 And now by their base offspring ; with a herd  
 Of men called Greeks, vain, unstable like sand,—  
 A mongrel throng from Macedon and Thrace,—  
 A barking rabble of Jews ; my subjects these !  
 Poor heritors of the great-thewed clan that launched  
 The earliest trireme on a startled wave,  
 Those keen Corinthian sea-hawks who enserfed  
 Corcyra, famed in rowers, and shook the pride  
 Of Athens and her admirals ! All the day  
 I sit in audience, striving to adjust  
 The balance of their lightness, listening  
 To the same dull reiterated tale :  
 How Greek robbed Roman, Roman battered Greek,

And Jew pounced on the booty whilst they fought.  
 Only at eve, when from inferior slopes  
 Acrocorinthian, gazing north, I see  
 Helicon, and the rich Crisæan plain,  
 My soul revives; the soul of Greece respires  
 In the dead lovely body of this land;  
 I dream old pageants and am comforted;  
 Yet briefly, since returning I behold  
 Some hollow lonely temple all deflowered  
 By brutal Mummius and his legionaries;  
 A shrine where gleams amid luxuriant briars  
 The perfect arm of some dishonoured god,  
 Or, built into a wall, the rain-worn brow  
 Of Aphrodite. Like a yellow beast  
 The city crouches in the sunset glow,  
 Naked and haggard. Ah! not in such haunts  
 She lingers, Love's bright queen!

. . . . .  
 I had ended here  
 My tale of disillusion, and filled the page  
 With idle speech of books; but that one word  
 Recalls not thee alone and thy grave brow,  
 Brother and firmest friend! An alien face,  
 Vivid as thine, less wan with knowledge, gleams  
 Pale in the growing amethyst of dusk,—

. . . . .

His face that, eager as thin altar-flame  
 Fed with crushed gums and powdered Orient herbs,  
 Flared when his stammering speech waxed plain with  
 love ;

His face, his face, beneath whose light my soul  
 Saw herself judged, her philosophic robe  
 Shrivelled ; her dismal weed of self-esteem  
 Burnt in the steady flame of those great eyes.  
 The man was fire, all fire !

Let me describe

The event,—a nothing,—since I fail to draw  
 The figure of its master ; 'twas a farce,  
 Type of the petty feuds that make accursed  
 This paradise of wranglers. Thou must know  
 That ere the acclamation died which hailed  
 Cæsar's proconsul, I was straitly warned  
 Of certain dues expected by the mob  
 From the new deputy ; my forerunners  
 Had been most wise in this ; briefly, 'twas hoped  
 I should play pandar to the law, and lean  
 A partial finger on its rising scale.  
 The test came ere three suns were dim. The Jews,  
 Confident in their influence and my fear,  
 Beset the seat of judgment, as a swarm  
 Of thirsty wasps a fruit, and in their midst  
 One man, their prisoner, staunch as a rock

U of M

In some discordant sea ; his lion's head  
 Thrown backward, and in his unshifting eyes  
 Nor hate nor fear, only a royal calm.  
 But once he glanced at me, when, having stilled  
 Some portion of the tumult, I required  
 His name, and answered : " Paul, the least of those  
 Who preach Christ crucified." Then all the Jews  
 Cried at him with fierce mouths, and Sosthenes  
 Their priest, that dark fanatic : " He hath bewitched  
 Crispus the ruler of our synagogue,  
 Deserter to this Christ, and would destroy  
 Our ancient worship, leading men to God  
 By strange unlawful paths." At once the throng,  
 Snarling like famished wolves, flashed up to me  
 A glare of tawny faces, and I read  
 Plain in their eyes the insult of their hope.  
 Then, for my blood was warm with this affront  
 To Roman honour, I said : " So vague a charge  
 Concerns me not ; speak, hath the man done aught  
 Subtly against his neighbour or the State ?  
 Hath he stolen or used violence ? " They answered :  
 " Nay, but he worships falsely." And the throng  
 Was silent, and this Paul stood, passing calm,  
 Waiting my leave to plead. But I, enraged  
 Less by their insolence than sick at heart  
 To see a good man so beset by fools,



Cried: "Think you god-like Cæsar sent me hither  
 As fountain of your law, to hold debate  
 Of washing pots, of clean and unclean meats,  
 To back your private quarrels, to unleash  
 The hydra of your custom at the throat  
 Of him who grieves you? By my staff, not thus!  
 If this man have indeed blasphemed your god,  
 Look ye to it, and seek not aid from Rome.  
 Dogs, do ye dare to whimper? Ho, my guards,  
 Whip me this rabble from the judgment seat!"

The most part went in fear, but Sosthenes,  
 Agrin with rage, shook fists at me, and cried  
 Strange curses; then the idle throng of Greeks,  
 No lovers of this sect, and swift to take  
 The popular wind, laid angry hands on him.  
 I let them brawl.

So vile a comedy,

Thou sayest, deserves oblivion; and indeed  
 I had forgotten all the paltry scene  
 But for that face. Is it not strange, O brother,  
 That in this feverish moment men call life,  
 This narrow ray betwixt the dark and dark,  
 A thousand features that we love or loathe  
 Shine, pass, and are forgotten, or remain  
 Blurred in the soul's false mirror, till there comes,

Terrible, without warning, like a fierce  
 Amazing star that changes night to noon,  
 The Master-face! This Paul the Christian,  
 This sword-blade man worn lean and dark with strife,  
 This dreamer and mad poet, frenzy led  
 Across the grim sea of a world's contempt  
 Full-sailed to the sharp reefs of shameful death,—  
 He was my star! 'Twas he for whom my soul  
 Had waited long in loneliness; his brow  
 Was smooth with some strange peace that I had sought,  
 Blindfold, since birth; all other men were ghosts;  
 He, he alone was vital! Thou and I,  
 Yea, all who yearn for truth beneath the sun,  
 Dig in the painful sand, perchance to find  
 Some tiny runnel from her central fount,  
 But he hath found the source! Her's is the road  
 That strikes straight up to heavenly perfectness,  
 But we have sown it with a thousand briars  
 And gaudy growths of falsehood, and are lost;  
 He is not lost, in whose triumphant eyes  
 Burns calm the perfect knowledge, the great hope,  
 The love that heals the red wounds of the world!

He hath departed hence to Syria.  
 I had no speech with him; I have no hope  
 To see him any more; death follows him

M. T. O. U.

Like his own shadow, and as little marked.  
 But ere he went, I found the means to hear  
 His voice, and, muffled, mid a humble throng  
 Of slaves and rustic hinds, to look farewell  
 On that great brow. The scanty ritual o'er,  
 Most quietly he spake, as doth a father  
 To his assembled sons; and while the words  
 Came halting from his lips, he smiled, like one  
 Who sees a steady vision that proclaims  
 Health for an old, mad earth, and knows all else  
 Dross, save that health. "For though I speak," he said,  
 "With tongues of men and angels, lacking Love  
 My voice is tuneless brass and jangled bells;  
 And though I prophesy, and comprehend  
 All mysteries and all knowledge, and possess  
 Faith that uproots the mountains, without Love  
 I am as nought; and though my hands bestow  
 All treasure on the poor; yea, though I give  
 This body to the fire, yet without Love  
 It profiteth me nothing." Then he told  
 How Love was kind, long-suffering, no envier,  
 Not boastful, not self-seeking; calm and wise,  
 Rejoicing in the truth; and last he spake  
 Of some great vision of the truth through Love,  
 When we, who see as in a darkened glass  
 Her shadow, shall behold her face to face . . .